Creation Myths Readings

# Japanese Creation Myth

Long ago all the elements were mixed together with one germ of life. This germ began to mix things around and around until the heavier part sank and the lighter part rose. A muddy sea that covered the entire earth was created. From this ocean grew a green shoot. It grew and grew until it reached the clouds and there it was transformed into a god. Soon this god grew lonely and it began to create other gods. The last two gods it made, Izanagi and Izanami, were the most remarkable.

One day as they were walking along they looked down on the ocean and wondered what was beneath it. Izanagi thrust his staff into the waters and as he pulled it back up some clumps of mud fell back into the sea. They began to harden and grow until they became the islands of Japan.

The two descended to these islands and began to explore, each going in different directions. They created all kinds of plants. When they met again they decided to marry and have children to inhabit the land. The first child Izanami bore was a girl of radiant beauty. The gods decided she was too beautiful to live in Japan, so they put her up in the sky and she became the sun. Their second daughter, Tsuki-yami, became the moon and their third and unruly son, Sosano-wo, was sentenced to the sea, where he creates storms.

Later, their first child, Amaterasu, bore a son who became the emperor of Japan and all the emperors since then have claimed descent from him. 

# Greek Creation Myth

In the beginning there was an empty darkness. The only thing in this void was Nyx, a bird with black wings. With the wind she laid a golden egg and for ages she sat upon this egg. Finally life began to stir in the egg and out of it arose Eros, the god of love. One half of the shell rose into the air and became the sky and the other became the Earth. Eros named the sky Uranus and the Earth he named Gaia. Then Eros made them fall in love.

Uranus and Gaia had many children together and eventually they had grandchildren. Some of their children become afraid of the power of their children. Kronos, in an effort to protect himself, swallowed his children when they were still infants. However, his wife Rhea hid their youngest child. She gave him a rock wrapped in swaddling clothes, which he swallowed, thinking it was his son.



Once the child, Zeus, had reached manhood his mother instructed him on how to trick his father to give up his brothers and sisters. Zeus surprised Kronos, kicked him in the stomach, which made Kronos vomit the rock and Zeus’ brothers and sisters. Once this was accomplished the children fought a mighty war against their father. After much fighting the younger generation won. With Zeus as their leader, they began to furnish Gaia with life and Uranus with stars.

Soon the Earth lacked only two things: man and animals. Zeus summoned his sons Prometheus (fore-thought) and Epimetheus (after-thought). He told them to go to Earth and create men and animals and give them each a gift.

Prometheus set to work forming men in the image of the gods and Epimetheus worked on the animals. As Epimetheus worked he gave each animal he created one of the gifts. After Epimetheus had completed his work Prometheus finally finished making men. However, when he went to see what gift to give man, Epimetheus shamefacedly informed him that he had foolishly used all the gifts.

Distressed, Prometheus decided he had to give man fire, even though gods were the only ones meant to have it. As the sun god rode out into the world the next morning Prometheus took some of the fire and brought it back to man. He taught his creation how to take care of it and then left them.

When Zeus discovered Prometheus' deed he became furious. He ordered his son to be chained to a mountain and for a vulture to peck out his liver every day till eternity. Then he began to devise a punishment for mankind. Another of his sons created a woman of great beauty, Pandora. Each of the gods gave her a gift. Zeus' present was curiosity and a box which he ordered her never to open. Then he presented her to Epimetheus as a wife.

Pandora's life with Epimetheus was happy except for her intense longing to open the box. She was convinced that because the gods and goddesses had showered so many glorious gifts upon her that this one would also be wonderful. One day when Epimetheus was gone she opened the box.

Out of the box flew all of the horrors which plague the world today - pain, sickness, envy, greed. Upon hearing Pandora's screams Epimetheus rushed home and fastened the lid shut, but all of the evils had already escaped.

Later that night they heard a voice coming from the box saying,

"Let me out. I am hope."

Pandora and Epimetheus released her and she flew out into the world to give hope to humankind.

# PanguPangu and the Creation of the World (Chinese)

This myth is similar to many creation myths worldwide, in which the world is formed out of the body of a primal being.

In the beginning there was darkness everywhere, and Chaos ruled. Within the darkness there formed an egg, and inside the egg the giant Pangu came into being. For aeons, safely inside the egg, Pangu slept and grew. When he had grown to gigantic size he stretched his huge limbs and in so doing broke the egg. The lighter parts of the egg floated upwards to form the heavens and the denser parts sank downwards, to become the earth. And so was formed earth and sky, Yin and Yang.

Pangu saw what had happened and he was pleased. But he feared that heaven and earth might meld together again, so he placed himself between them, his head holding up the sky and his feet firmly upon the earth. Pangu continued to grow at a rate of ten feet a day for 18,000 years, so increasing the distance between heaven and earth, until they seemed fixed and secure, 30,000 miles apart. Now exhausted, Pangu went back to sleep and never woke up.

Pangu died, and his body went to make the world and all its elements. The wind and clouds were formed from his breath, his voice was thunder and lightning, his eyes became the sun and moon, his arms and his legs became the four directions of the compass and his trunk became the mountains. His flesh turned into the soil and the trees that grow on it, his blood into the rivers that flow and his veins into paths men travel. His body hair became the grass and herbs, and his skin the same, while precious stones and minerals were formed from his bones and teeth. His sweat became the dew and the hair of his head became the stars that trail throughout heaven. As for the parasites on his body, these became the divers races of humankind.

Although Pangu is dead, some say he is still responsible for the weather, which fluctuates according to his moods.

### The Cosmic Egg

Myths of a ‘cosmic egg’ are common to many cultures, signifying the origins of conscious life. In some versions the egg is produced by a mother figure of some description, and even where this is absent, it is present by implication. At one level it merely dramatizes the experience of every individual, starting existence in the egg-shape of the womb, which is at first a container and a totality. Conscious, separate existence is achieved when the container is breached, but ends at death, when the constituents of the body return to the earth to become part of the cycle of life.

The myth of Pangu on this small level gives meaning to each individual life, and may be a way of processing the idea that the world existed long before we did and will continue long after death. Creation myths embody the internal process of increasing consciousness of the world.

**Ra and the Cosmic Egg (Egypt)**

Once upon a time, before there was land, fish, land animals, or human life, there was the great expansion of primordial waters that encompassed the Universe.  Nothing existed in these primordial waters since the beginning of time, until a great egg appeared in the water.  This egg contained a living God by the name of Ra.  Once his egg hatched, he burst forth into the Universe and took his place amongst the Universe as its great ruler.

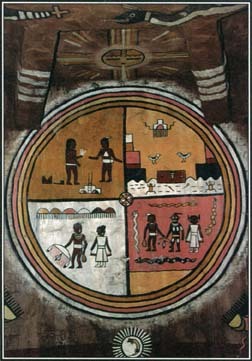
Ra gave birth to four children, two girls and two boys.  The boys were named Shu and Geb. The girls were named Tefnut and Nut.  Shu and Tefnut fell in love.  Their love lifted them to the greatest heights of the Universe and because relationships can be difficult, it spread them thin.  They became the atmosphere.  They relied heavily on Geb who had to hold them up. Geb had to become strong and firm in his guidance of them, so he became the earth.  He lifted up Nut to become the sky because he felt that Shu and Tefnut would need a space to reside.  Nut provided a place for their love to grow.

After all of this, Geb and Nut fell in love as well.   After some time had passed, Geb and Nut had four children as well.  They also had two sons and two daughters.  The sons were Set and Osiris and the daughters were Isis and Nephthys. Like their parents and their aunt and uncle, they fell in love too.  Osiris and Isis fell in love and Set and Nephthys fell in love. Set and Osiris, however, did not get along. After their grandfather Ra passed away, Osiris was called to succeed Ra as ruler of the Universe. Set did not like this. He felt that he should be ruler.  Osiris however became king of all the earth. Isis became his Queen and helped him to rule his great kingdom.

Set was so angry with Osiris that he killed him.  This greatly hurt Isis who could not bear to be without her beloved Osiris.  With the help of the God Anubis, who was the God of embalming, she had him properly embalmed.  Isis used her spiritual powers to resurrect Osiris. She brought many herbs to anoint his body and said many prayers over his dead body.  Her loving devotion brought him back to life. He ascended to the Netherworld, which is the land of the dead.

Before all of this occurred,  Isis and Osiris had a son named Horus.  After Osiris died, Horus avenged his father and to take back his kingdom. He knew he was the rightful heir as ruler of the earth. He killed Set in a great battle and then Horus took his rightful place as king of the earth.

**The Four Creations (Hopi)**

      The world at first was endless space in which existed only the Creator, Taiowa. This world had no time, no shape, and no life, except in the mind of the Creator. Eventually the infinite creator created the finite in Sotuknang, whom he called his nephew and whom he created as his agent to establish nine universes. Sotuknang gathered together matter from the endless space to make the nine solid worlds. Then the Creator instructed him to gather together the waters from the endless space and place them on these worlds to make land and sea. When Sotuknang had done that, the Creator instructed him to gather together air to make winds and breezes on these worlds.

      The fourth act of creation with which the Creator charged Sotuknang was the creation of life. Sotuknang went to the world that was to first host life and there he created Spider Woman, and he gave her the power to create life. First Spider Woman took some earth and mixed it with saliva to make two beings. Over them she sang the Creation Song, and they came to life. She instructed one of them, Poqanghoya, to go across the earth and solidify it. She instructed the other, Palongawhoya, to send out sound to resonate through the earth, so that the earth vibrated with the energy of the Creator. Poqanghoya and Palongawhoya were despatched to the poles of the earth to keep it rotating.

      Then Spider Woman made all the plants, the flowers, the bushes, and the trees. Likewise she made the birds and animals, again using earth and singing the Creation Song. When all this was done, she made human beings, using yellow, red, white, and black earth mixed with her saliva. Singing the Creation Song, she made four men, and then in her own form she made four women. At first they had a soft spot in their foreheads, and although it solidified, it left a space through which they could hear the voice of Sotuknang and their Creator. Because these people could not speak, Spider Woman called on Sotuknang, who gave them four languages. His only instructions were for them to respect their Creator and to live in harmony with him.

      These people spread across the earth and multiplied. Despite their four languages, in those days they could understand each other's thoughts anyway, and for many years they and the animals lived together as one. Eventually, however, they began to divide, both the people from the animals and the people from each other, as they focused on their differences rather than their similarities. As division and suspicion became more widespread, only a few people from each of the four groups still remembered their Creator. Sotuknang appeared before these few and told them that he and the Creator would have to destroy this world, and that these few who remembered the Creator must travel across the land, following a cloud and a star, to find refuge. These people began their treks from the places where they lived, and when they finally converged Sotuknang appeared again. He opened a huge ant mound and told these people to go down in it to live with the ants while he destroyed the world with fire, and he told them to learn from the ants while they were there. The people went down and lived with the ants, who had storerooms of food that they had gathered in the summer, as well as chambers in which the people could live. This went on for quite a while, because after Sotuknang cleansed the world with fire it took a long time for the world to cool off. As the ants' food ran low, the people refused the food, but the ants kept feeding them and only tightened their own belts, which is why ants have such tiny waists today.

      Finally Sotuknang was done making the second world, which was not quite as beautiful as the first. Again he admonished the people to remember their Creator as they and the ants that had hosted them spread across the earth. The people multiplied rapidly and soon covered the entire earth. They did not live with the animals, however, because the animals in this second world were wild and unfriendly. Instead the people lived in villages and built roads between these, so that trade sprang up. They stored goods and traded those for goods from elsewhere, and soon they were trading for things they did not need. As their desire to have more and more grew, they began to forget their Creator, and soon wars over resources and trade were breaking out between villages. Finally Sotuknang appeared before the few people who still remembered the Creator, and again he sent them to live with the ants while he destroyed this corrupt world. This time he ordered Poqanghoya and Palongawhoya to abandon their posts at the poles, and soon the world spun out of control and rolled over. Mountains slid and fell, and lakes and rivers splashed across the land as the earth tumbled, and finally the earth froze over into nothing but ice.

      This went on for years, and again the people lived with the ants. Finally Sotuknang sent Poqanghoya and Palongawhoya back to the poles to resume the normal rotation of the earth, and soon the ice melted and life returned. Sotuknang called the people up from their refuge, and he introduced them to the third world that he had made. Again he admonished the people to remember their Creator as they spread across the land. As they did so, they multiplied quickly, even more quickly than before, and soon they were living in large cities and developing into separate nations. With so many people and so many nations, soon there was war, and some of the nations made huge shields on which they could fly, and from these flying shields they attacked other cities. When Sotuknang saw all this war and destruction, he resolved to destroy this world quickly before it corrupted the few people who still remembered the Creator. He called on Spider Woman to gather those few and, along the shore, she placed each person with a little food in the hollow stem of a reed. When she had done this, Sotuknang let loose a flood that destroyed the warring cities and the world on which they lived.

      Once the rocking of the waves ceased, Spider Woman unsealed the reeds so the people could see. They floated on the water for many days, looking for land, until finally they drifted to an island. On the island they built little reed boats and set sail again to the east. After drifting many days, they came to a larger island, and after many more days to an even larger island. They hoped that this would be the fourth world that Sótuknang had made for them, but Spider Woman assured them that they still had a long and hard journey ahead. They walked across this island and built rafts on the far side, and set sail to the east again. They came to a fourth and still larger island, but again they had to cross it on foot and then build more rafts to continue east. From this island, Spider Woman sent them on alone, and after many days they encountered a vast land. Its shores were so high that they could not find a place to land, and only by opening the doors in their heads did they know where to go to land.

      When they finally got ashore, Sotuknang was there waiting for them. As they watched to the west, he made the islands that they had used like stepping stones disappear into the sea. He welcomed them to the fourth world, but he warned them that it was not as beautiful as the previous ones, and that life here would be harder, with heat and cold, and tall mountains and deep valleys. He sent them on their way to migrate across the wild new land in search of the homes for their respective clans. The clans were to migrate across the land to learn its ways, although some grew weak and stopped in the warm climates or rich lands along the way. The Hopi trekked and far and wide, and went through the cold and icy country to the north before finally settling in the arid lands between the Colorado River and Rio Grande River. They chose that place so that the hardship of their life would always remind them of their dependence on, and link to, their Creator.

**Odin and Ymir**

      In the beginning of time, there was nothing: neither sand, nor sea, nor cool waves. Neither the heaven nor earth existed. Instead, long before the earth was made, Niflheim was made, and in it a spring gave rise to twelve rivers. To the south was Muspell, a region of heat and brightness guarded by Surt, a giant who carried a flaming sword. To the north was frigid Ginnungagap, where the rivers froze and all was ice. Where the sparks and warm winds of Muspell reached the south side of frigid Ginnungagap, the ice thawed and dripped, and from the drips thickened and formed the shape of a man. His name was Ymir, the first of and ancestor of the frost-giants.

      As the ice dripped more, it formed a cow, and from her teats flowed four rivers of milk that fed Ymir. The cow fed on the salt of the rime ice, and as she licked a man's head began to emerge. By the end of the third day of her licking, the whole man had emerged, and his name was Buri. He had a son named Bor, who married Bestla, a daughter of one of the giants. Bor and Bestla had three sons, one of whom was Odin, the most powerful of the gods.

      Ymir was a frost-giant, but not a god, and eventually he turned to evil. After a struggle between the giant and the young gods, Bor's three sons killed Ymir. So much blood flowed from his wounds that all the frost-giants were drowned but one, who survived only by builiding an ark for himself and his familly. Bor's sons dragged Ymir's immense body to the center of Ginnungagap, and from him they made the earth. Ymir's blood became the sea, his bones became the rocks and crags, and his hair became the trees. Bor's sons took Ymir's skull and with it made the sky. In it they fixed sparks and molten slag from Muspell to make the stars, and other sparks they set to move in paths just below the sky. They threw Ymir's brains into the sky and made the clouds. The earth is a disk, and they set up Ymir's eyelashes to keep the giants at the edges of that disk.

      On the sea shore, Bor's sons found two logs and made people out of them. One son gave them breath and life, the second son gave them consciousness and movement, and the third gave them faces, speech, hearing, and sight. From this man and woman came all humans thereafter, just as all the gods were descended from the sons of Bor.

      Odin and his brothers had set up the sky and stars, but otherwise they left the heavens unlit. Long afterwards, one of the descendants of those first two people that the brothers created had two children. Those two children were so beautiful that their father named the son Moon and the daughter Sol. The gods were jealous already and, when they heard of the father's arrogance, they pulled the brother and sister up to the sky and set them to work. Sol drives the chariot that carries the sun across the skies, and she drives so fast across the skies of the northland because she is chased by a giant wolf each day. Moon likewise takes a course across the sky each night, but not so swiftly because he is not so harried.

      The gods did leave one pathway from earth to heaven. That is the bridge that appears in the sky as a rainbow, and its perfect arc and brilliant colors are a sign of its origin with the gods. It nonetheless will not last for ever, because it will break when the men of Muspell try to cross it into heaven.

**COMPARE TO RELIGION**

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| **Genesis** |
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| *1* | Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. |
| *2* | And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. [Heb. 4.4](http://www.bartleby.com/108/58/4.html#4), [10](http://www.bartleby.com/108/58/4.html#10) |
| *3* | And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: [Ex. 20.11](http://www.bartleby.com/108/02/20.html#11) because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made. |
| **Man in the Garden of Eden** | |
| *4* | ¶ These *are* the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, |
| *5* | and every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and *there was* not a man to till the ground. |
| *6* | But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground. |
| *7* | And the LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. [1 Cor. 15.45](http://www.bartleby.com/108/46/15.html#45) |
| *8* | And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. |
| *9* | And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life [Rev. 2.7](http://www.bartleby.com/108/66/2.html#7) ; [22.2](http://www.bartleby.com/108/66/22.html#2), [14](http://www.bartleby.com/108/66/22.html#14) also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. |
| *10* | ¶ And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. |
| *11* | The name of the first *is* Pison: that *is* it which compasseth the whole land of Hav'ilah, where *there is* gold; |
| *12* | and the gold of that land *is* good: there *is* bdellium and the onyx stone. |
| *13* | And the name of the second river *is* Gihon: the same *is* it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. |
| *14* | And the name of the third river *is* Hid'dekel: that *is* it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river *is* Euphra'tes. |
| *15* | ¶ And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. |
| *16* | And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: |
| *17* | but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. |
| *18* | ¶ And the LORD God said, *It is* not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him. |
| *19* | And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought *them* unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that *was* the name thereof. |
| *20* | And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found a help meet for him. |
| *21* | And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. |
| *22* | And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. |
| *23* | And Adam said, This *is* now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, [1](http://www.bartleby.com/108/01/2.html" \l "note1#note1) because she was taken out of Man. [2](http://www.bartleby.com/108/01/2.html" \l "note2#note2) |
| *24* | Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. [Mt. 19.5](http://www.bartleby.com/108/40/19.html#5) · [Mk. 10.7](http://www.bartleby.com/108/41/10.html#7), [8](http://www.bartleby.com/108/41/10.html#8) · [1 Cor. 6.16](http://www.bartleby.com/108/46/6.html#16) · [Eph. 5.31](http://www.bartleby.com/108/49/5.html#31) |
| *25* | And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed. |